

Canine Bulletin

Nebraska Task Force - 1

April 2001



Test participants, AKUT members and American evaluator cadre.

Istanbul, Turkey March 17 - 18, 2001

Submitted by: Elaine Sawtell

I have always considered it an honor to be a member of the evaluator cadre at a FEMA test, but never more so than the evaluation conducted March 17 - 18 in Istanbul, Turkey, under FEMA Type II guidelines.

Pat Hawn, Teresa MacPherson and I were privileged to see the accomplishments of dog and handler teams that have overcome seemingly impossible odds in a few short months. All but one of the testing teams began training at the SCC school sponsored by International Emergency Response K9 in Istanbul in early September 2000. Instructors were Pat Hawn, Hakan Kaynaraglu,

LaFond and Keith Davis.

Seven teams tested; five passed. Two were Istanbul police officers with German Shepherd patrol dogs. Hercul (Hercules) came to the school knowing how to bite but not bark. The second police handler did not have a dog at the school.

One team was a member of the AKUT, Turkey's volunteer SAR group. Cengiz and Jenny, his German Shepherd, had been training since March 2000. However, Jenny was hit by a car five weeks before the test and suffered severe back injuries.

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Liz climbing the ladder in the agility element.



AKUT heavy rescue equipment working on the pile Friday.

Be Careful What You Ask For...

Submitted by: Elaine Sawtell

At a recent training in Springfield, I asked Sue McDaniel and Vince Rameriz to bring distractions for the rubble pile for Ditto, something to challenge her.

Vince brought a pair of dirty socks and a piece of bread.

Sue brought a smelly horse blanket, three kinds of animal poop, a live chicken, a live rabbit and a lamb. We tied "Lamb Chop" in the rubble pile and he also provided a noise distraction.

The Moral: If you ask Sue for an elephant, you better have a place to keep it!! |



ISU Exercise

Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa will be demolishing a dorm building in May. NE-TF1 has been informed that a search exercise will be held on May 19 and that canine teams are invited to attend on your own. Contact Steve Dolezal at Station 14, 441-8494, for more information. |



Mail your training logs to:
Sandy Yost
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Two were Ankara firefighters. Osman's Doberman, Alex, came to the school with no bark.

Then there was Liz, a small Pointer mix, maybe 18 inches tall, rescued from the streets of Ankara by her firefighter partner, Teoman. At the school she was skinny and shy and hid between her handler's legs. At the test she performed all elements confidently and searched with intensity and efficiency, finishing the rubble portion in six minutes.

Some things that stand out:

- Test nerves are universal. The language barrier could not disguise the sweaty palms and nervous questions of handlers.
- The all-male Doberman who pulled his handler everywhere to check and cover every blade of grass but was a perfect gentleman when Teresa returned him to Osman on the aggression test and who completed the rubble portion of the test in 3 - ½ minutes.
- The bark alert. All six teams who passed the alert barrel did so with focus and commitment to the victim – not even looking back when the 30 seconds was completed and
- The old women in scarves and long coats who stopped to watch the bark alert elements and began cheering and clapping for each successful dog when they figured out the sequence.
- The confidence and teamwork with which each dog completed the agility; but, in particular, Jenny, the German Shepherd still recovering from her injuries, lacking muscle tone but overflowing with hear, who pulled herself up the ladder.
- The direction and control. When has the course been set up in a structure constructed 700 years ago, in the Byzantine period? Walls of layered rock "seven humans high" surrounded what is now a soccer field but was once used to house elephants.



Turkish press interviewing Evaluator Pat Hawn with Liz, the street dog, not search dog, after the test.

handlers let out ear-splitting YEE-HAAAs (sounding vaguely like Keith David with a Turkish twang.)

working through any confusion and following handler directions. Every dog flew top speed off of second base and did a true emergency stop at pitcher's mound.

• Then there was the realism of the rubble. A shoe factory, which had once been the livelihood of local residents in a busy neighborhood of shops and high-rise apartments, now became a place to test dog and handler in saving lives. No stable rubble pile here where the teams had trained and practiced countless times; this building was brought down on Friday. The AKUT heavy equipment operators, safety officers, along with IC Hakan and the evaluator cadre, worked until 10 p.m. Friday night to stabilize the dangerous and difficult pile and find safe victim locations.

• The victims. On Saturday they stayed five hours buried in barrels under concrete – five hours. We talked to one the next day. Through a translator, he told us of working 15 days at the epicenter of the Izmet quake, of seeing what the people trapped were feeling. As he lay in the barrel he re-lived the quake and the fear. He could have radioed and gotten out. But he stayed because, in his words, he knew the seriousness

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Placing a barrel in the pile. All victims were put in barrels because of the instability of the pile.

None of the dogs had practiced or trained here. Six teams successfully completed the course in well under the three-minute limit. Some got confused and went off course. But what stands out most was the attention they gave their handlers, not running perfect robotic patterns but confidently



Uncovering one of the victims after the test on Sunday.

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of the task the dogs and handlers were asked to perform and knew that what he was experiencing would make him a real victim for the dogs.

- The teamwork of each handler letting his dog do the search work and initiate the alert, the care given by each handler after a find and before restarting, the pure joy after the second alert and pinpoint.

The Istanbul police handler who wept inconsolably, convinced that his poor search strategy kept his dog from finding the second victim on Saturday.

One day one each team was brought to the rubble site in a AKUT pickup truck with siren blaring. The legendary Turkish traffic never slackened, shopkeepers went about their business, neighborhood residents gathered on the street to watch or hung out apartment windows. Children called and whistled to the dogs, often yelling the dog's name over and over once they heard the handler say it. And, of course, the ever-present street dogs barked at the intruders.

The test area was approximately 45 by 50 yards (yards, not feet), and the victims were widely placed. Scenting conditions turned out to be difficult. Although each victim was found and alerts made, no team found both victims. Some teams learned hard lessons in search strategy. The test was called because of darkness six minutes into the last team's turn.

Day two, new holes were created, new safety factors dealt with. Because of the solid performance by all six teams in elements one through four on the previous day and because of the unique, realistic rubble setting, the evaluators decided to conduct only the rubble portion, as permitted in the FEMA standard.

Handlers and evaluators held hands in a circle and prayed for God's blessing and care.

five of the testing teams found and alerted on both victims in time ranging from 3 -1/2 to 12 minutes. The dogs were consistent in their victim loyalty. They covered the pile, somehow hearing their handler's voice amidst the confusion. The alerts were strong, none precipitated by the handler.

Living in the memory of 40,000 lost lives and the ever present quake threat must impart a seriousness to the task to both dog and handler that we who have not experienced that reality cannot duplicate. |



Are these some well trained dogs or what?

How Do I Submit Items for the Canine Bulletin?

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